

Time is of the Essence

What the past 500 years means for the future of Black Male Achievement

This timeline seeks to shed light on how 500 years of slavery, discrimination and disenfranchisement has contributed to the current employment and economic crisis faced by African American men in the United States. In 2012, there were almost 6 million African American men and youth unemployed or not actively seeking work. Of this number, nearly 3.5 million were low income - below 200% of the federal threshold. From the 1960's until today, unemployment rates for black men have been 2 to 2.5 times the white unemployment rate. At the height of the Great Recession, the unemployment rate for black men peaked at 14%, which was nearly double the national average of 6.6% and higher than the national average during the great depression. As of May 2014, there were 717,000 unemployed black youth between the ages of 16-24 in the United States. Recognizing the implications of the historical, social, and political factors and decisions that have contributed to the current employment crisis faced by African American men and youth is critical to shaping future policy.

Indeed, we believe that in order to chart a path forward and adopt equitable policies that expand economic opportunity for everyone we must understand the origins and factors that have contributed to economic inequality in the first place. Our goal is that the events described in this timeline can help us move forward and begin to unlock the potential of our future by helping us craft policy solutions that expand economic equality for all and avoid the intentional or unintentional pitfalls of the past.

It took several hundred years of intentional and unintentional contributions from policies at virtually every level of government and community to create and sustain the current problem. Bringing about change will require a broad coalition of stakeholders, policy change at all levels of government, and a commitment to ensuring equity in employment and economic policy reform.

We seek policy reform that:

- Ensures that Americans working full time do not live in poverty.
- Puts families and workers first and ensures employment protections for all workers.
- Maintains and strengthens the social safety net for people who cannot work and those that live in poverty.
- Gives every American who wants to work the opportunity to work and build skills.
- Invests in youth, our next generation of workers.

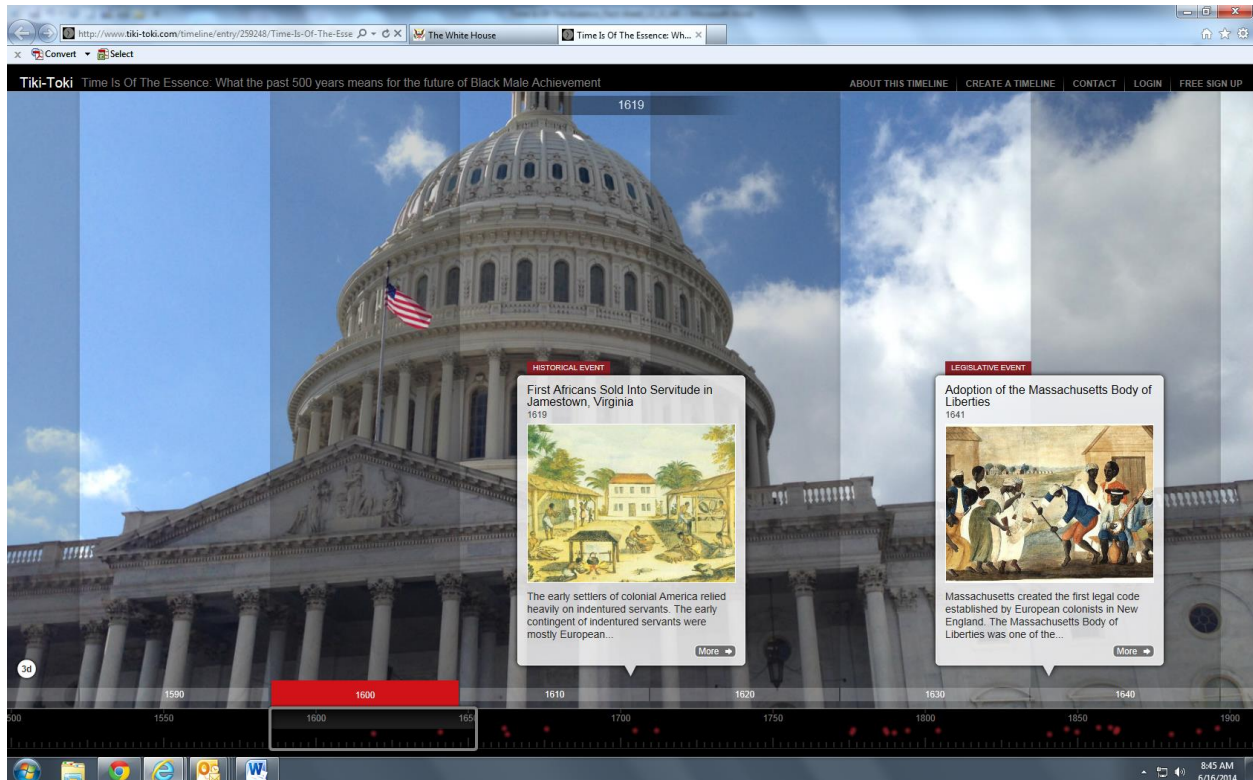
Some examples of ways this timeline can be used in communities throughout the nation:

- As the backdrop for conversations during town hall or community meetings.
- As a presentation at a diversity, equity framing, or policy advocacy workshop.
- As a training tool for staff working with African American populations.
- As an education tool for government agency employees.

- As a debate prompt for elected officials.

To view the timeline, click the link below:

[TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.](http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/259248/Time-Is-Of-The-Essence)



If you have questions, would like more information about this timeline, or would like to request that our staff present this timeline in the context for the need for equity-focused employment and economic policy discussion, please contact James Jones via email at jajones@heartlandalliance.org

B.MORE Initiative at Heartland Alliance: The B.MORE Initiative seeks to open doors to employment and economic advancement for low-income black men across the country through policy advocacy, resource creation, and coalition building. The B.MORE Initiative is supported by the Open Society Foundation [Campaign for Black Male Achievement](#).

Please contact [James Jones](#), B.MORE Initiative Coordinator or [Melissa Young](#), Associate Director, if you would like more information or are interested in getting involved.